

John Chiang sworn in as new State Controller

On January 8, 2007, John Chiang was sworn in as the new State Controller, and the new chair of the Franchise Tax Board. Here is his complete swearing-in speech.

Good evening friends and fellow Californians...my family and I are blessed by your presence tonight and your support over the years.



State Controller and FTB Chair, John Chiang

Many thanks to my good friend, Assemblyman Dave Jones, for emceeding tonight's ceremony. He is the unwavering voice of justice in the Legislature and a tireless servant to the people of this state. Thank you, Dave.

I want to thank my smart and beautiful wife, Terry, for her love and infinite patience with me and I want to thank my mother who is my inspiration and role model.

Let me take a moment to recognize three distinguished public servants.

First, I want to recognize my predecessor, the Honorable Steve Westly. He has transformed the office and made it one in which we can be proud.

He pioneered programs that cut down on waste and made government more open to the people. His iconoclastic approach to politics helped to overcome partisan division in stabilizing our state's finances.

Steve, I also want to thank you for your friendship, leadership, and guidance. I hope to build upon your worthy work as State Controller.

Next, I want to acknowledge the impressive work by the Honorable Phil Angelides. He brought brilliance of ideas and relentless dedication to the Office of Treasurer.

He has proudly been the fiscal conscience of the state that undauntedly advocated for the investments and policies to best serve the people of this state.

We are all indebted to you for your work and service. I will look to your work as a beacon for the investment initiatives that I plan to propose as California's State Controller.

I wish the both of you the very best in your endeavors and I know that you will be greeted with the gratitude of all Californians wherever you go.

I want to also commend Governor Schwarzenegger for his commitment to bring this state together to face the many challenges ahead.

In a time when many issues divide this nation, he has offered a path of collegiality that will serve our state and nation well.

I want to thank the local elected officials, state legislators, and other constitutional officers for joining me here tonight.

I am humbled by your graciousness and generosity.

Friends, I hope that tonight is not simply about me but rather about the beginning that we are all embarking upon.

Our state faces many challenges ahead and many pundits and people are wondering if we are up to the task of meeting these challenges.

If you will allow me be so bold as to suggest that our goal should not be to simply meet these challenges...but rather, to exceed these challenges.

Because for me, a child of immigrants with humble beginnings to have achieved this great opportunity...portends to a greater America...one that consistently accomplishes the impossible and is fearless in the face of great uncertainty.

This is the promise and legacy of our nation that is reflected by the railroads remembered in this museum.

For, you see, the completion of the transcontinental railroad was more than a feat of engineering genius...it was a tribute to character and determination that makes us the most unique and celebrated democracy in the world.

Great visionaries embarked on an uncertain and unparalleled effort to join our nation from sea to shining sea in the aftermath of the divisive Civil War.

On May 10, 1869, thousands of miles of tracks laid mostly by immigrants linked the West Coast with the East Coast and led to the political, economic, and cultural unification of our nation.

But behind this great story are more poignant stories of the indomitable and heroic spirit of our people and what we can accomplish when we work together.

One of these stories is that of the "Ten Mile Day."
The story goes like this...

The Union Pacific broke all records by laying six miles of track in one day and they challenged Charles Crocker and his Chinese workers of the Central Pacific to match that accomplishment.

Undaunted, Crocker boldly declared his men would lay ten miles of rail in a day and was then ridiculed and scoffed at in the rival camps of the Union Pacific.

In fact, Vice President Durant of the rival Union Pacific bet \$10,000 that it could not be done.

Inspired by the bet, a squad of eight Irishmen and a small army of Chinese immigrants made a record in track laying that has never been equaled.

In one day, on April 28, 1869, these men, fired with the enthusiasm of the greatest railroad construction race in the history of the world, laid ten miles and fifty-six feet of track in a little less than 12 hours to bring the railhead of the Central Pacific three and one-half miles from Promontory, Utah.

This is the promise and legacy of our nation and our state.

My friends, there is no doubt that we face mighty challenges ahead.

Let tonight be the time that we take on the "bet" and do what no other state has done in the history of our nation.

Let tonight be the time that we bring our people together like the immigrant workers on April 28, 1869, to do the unimaginable...and to do it in the face of sheer uncertainty.

Let tonight be the time that we lay the groundwork to make healthcare available to all Californians,

...and world-class education accessible to all of California's children,

...and a warm and safe home affordable to all Californians,

...and create jobs that embrace the greatest talents of our workers.

Ladies and Gentlemen...friends...tonight I accept this challenge as California's 31st State Controller and I invite you to join me in reaffirming the greatness of our people and our nation by accomplishing the impossible.

Thank you and God bless.